

II. Remarks

Claims 1, 3-5, and 7-11 were pending in this application and have been rejected. By this amendment, Applicants have amended claim 1 to more particularly point out and clarify Applicants' invention. No new matter has been added by the present amendment. After this amendment, claim 1, 3-5 and 7-11 will be pending.

Reconsideration of the application in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 4-5, and 8-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,560,647 issued to Klages, et al. ("Klages") in view of U.S. Publication No. 2002/0153710 issued to Gray, et al. ("Gray"). In view of the amendments and remarks contained herein, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of claims 1, 4-5 and 8-10 are traversed.

Claim 1 has been amended to recite that the inner side has a hinge material weakness that is configured as a flat based groove formed therein defining a hinge that folds without tearing to form a cover flap upon deployment of the airbag to open the housing cover. Support for this amendment may be found in Applicants' application at paragraph [0036] and Figure 2.

Gray discloses an airbag door system 2 for an instrument trim panel comprising a substrate 8, an outer shell 11 and foam 6 where all three layers possess a line of mechanical weakness with each line of mechanical weakness at least partially

separating each layer into an airbag door portion 10 and a trim portion 20. *Gray at Abstract.* In the area of the airbag door 10, a reinforcing member 30 is disposed adjacent to the foam 6 and attached directly to the substrate 8. *Id.* at paragraph [0092]. As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the substrate 8 portion of the airbag door 17 is separated from the trim member substrate 27 by a U-shaped pattern of apertures that define a mechanical line of weakness which tear open upon airbag deployment. *Id.* at paragraph [0098]. Extending along the top of the U-shape, the airbag door substrate 17 and the trim member substrate 27 have a junction 50 which has varying thickness created by a molded-in sharply pointed V-shaped notch 58. *Id.* at paragraph [0115]. The reinforcement 30 is made of metal and has apertures and bridges 65 that extend over the junction 50 of the airbag door substrate 17 where the bridges 65 function as a hinge, a tether, and/or an energy management device when the deployment force is applied to the airbag door 10. *Id.* at paragraph [0123]. Depending on the deployment conditions, the junction 50 fractures or breaks along the notch 58, but due to the connection of the airbag door substrate 17 to the reinforcement 30 by the metal reinforcement 30, the reinforcement bridges 65 allow the junction 50 to function as a hinge, a tether, and/or an energy management device. *Id.* at paragraph [0116]. Notably, the notch 58 is V-shaped and does not have a flat base and is configured to fracture or break depending on the deployment conditions.

Klages discloses an integrally molded airbag module door cover for an automotive dash panel 10. The airbag cover is ruptureable from the panel 10 during airbag deployment along tearlines 24 and 26 and pivots from the panel 10 along a hinge line 28 to produce an opening door 42. The tearlines 24 and 26 are defined by V-shaped grooves formed on the rear surface 14 of the panel 10. As illustrated, the hinge

line 28 is defined by a single step of increased material thickness formed in the panel 10 on the rearward edge of the deployable door 42. *Klages* at Col. 2, line 21 to Col. 3, line 29, and Figures 1-5. Notably, the single step of increased material thickness defining the hinge line is not material weakness formed from a groove and in particular, the hinge line is not configured as a flat based groove.

Neither Gray nor Klages independently or in combination disclose, teach or suggest the present invention recited in claim 1. In particular, neither Gray nor Klages independently or in combination disclose, teach or suggest an airbag housing cover with an inner side having a hinge material weakness that is configured as a flat based groove formed therein defining a hinge that folds without tearing to form a cover flap upon deployment of the airbag to open the housing cover. Rather, Gray discloses a V-shaped notch 58 that is configured to fracture or break depending on the deployment conditions but is held together by bridges 65 of a metal reinforcement 30, and Klages discloses a hinge line formed by a single step of increased material thickness on the rearward edge of the deployable door 42. In that Gray and Klages lack the noted elements of claim 1, the rejections based thereon should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicants believe that claim 1 and its dependent claims 4-5 and 8-10 are in a condition for allowance.

Claims 3, 7, and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Klages and Gray, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,799,970 issued to Enders ("Enders"). In view of the amendments and remarks contained herein, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections of claims 3, 7, and 11 are traversed.

Since claims 3, 7, and 11 depend from claim 1 and since Enders fails to disclose an airbag housing cover with an inner side having a hinge material weakness that is configured as a flat based groove formed therein defining a hinge that folds without tearing to form a cover flap upon deployment of the airbag to open the housing cover, the combination of Klages, Gray and Enders cannot render the claims as obvious. Therefore the rejections of claims 3, 7 and 11 should be withdrawn. Accordingly, Applicants believe that claims 3, 7 and 11 are in a condition for allowance.

Conclusion

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present form of the claims are patentably distinguishable over the art of record and that this application is now in condition for allowance. Such action is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: October 16, 2009

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